

**I CORINTHIANS**  
**Chapter 7:10-24**

The multi-millionaire J. Paul Getty once said: "I'd trade my fortune for just one happy marriage." It is obvious by the many divorces of our day that there are many couples who are living in an unhappy marriage.

Marriage was intended to be heaven on earth, not a place of torment and unhappiness. God's plan for marriage was that it be a happy and joyous relationship. How sad, so many marriages fall far short of what they can be and what God intended them to be.

In - **verses 6-9**, as we saw in our last lesson, Paul answers the question, "Should a person get married or not?" Now, in - **verses 10-15** Paul answers the questions, "Should I go or stay?"

**VERSES 10-11:**

In **verse 10, "And unto the married I command"** some might say, "If the unmarried position is best now, it will be better to leave the spouse." Paul very emphatically replies that idea was not true because the Lord commands otherwise".

The reason for seeking this departure is not given, but one obvious thing is that one is unhappy and wants to leave the other. There are many things that can create unhappiness in a marriage but, getting a divorce just because you are unhappy is neither allowed nor permitted by God - **Matthew 5:32; Matthew 19:9**

But, if she ignores the commands of God and leaves anyway because there is such disagreement - **"let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife"**. The wife "departs," because she leaves the home; the husband - **"put away his wife,"** by sending her off both are equally forbidden. The same rules apply to each sex. Among the Jews only the husband exercised the right of divorce; among the Greeks and Romans, the wife exercised it equally with the husband.

We live in a day and time when a divorce is granted for almost any reason, but that doesn't change God's Word! One can be led into error by something that may be legally right to do, but morally and biblically wrong. The laws of society may give approval of lots of things but when they defy or contradict the Word of God the social laws are wrong - **Acts 5:29**. Judges, legislation nor the Supreme Court can change the commands or Laws of God!

**Pastor's notes:** This is not a lesson on divorce, but instead deals with a specific situation where the husband or wife leaves the marriage for no known reason other than being unhappy and wanting out of the marriage.

**VERSES 12-13:**

Christians are forbidden to marry unbelievers - **7:39; II Corinthians 6:14**, this problem of mixed marriages resulted when one of the partners was saved after marriage. Does God sanction the marriage of two unsaved people? Does the salvation of one partner

end the marriage? The answer is clear. The Christian husband should not divorce nor leave the unsaved wife if she desires to continue the marriage under the new circumstances - **7:12**. Also, the Christian wife should not divorce nor **"leave"** ("put away" and **"leave"** are the same word in the Greek; *aphieto*; **7:13**) the unsaved husband if he desires to maintain the marital union - **7:13**.

Not all mixed marriages (a saved and unsaved spouse) have problems because of this difference. It is possible that the relationship can be harmonious.

It would appear that in the Corinthian Church there were some that believed that since they were saved, it was wrong to be married to an unsaved spouse. Therefore, they felt they should leave the unsaved spouse. But Paul says that is not necessary. The word **"pleased"** speaks of each thinking well of each other, agreeing with one another. Even though one is saved and the other unsaved, they still find happiness in this marriage. Paul says to both a saved husband - **"let him not put her away,"** and to a saved wife, **"let her not leave him."**

#### **VERSE 14:**

In this verse Paul speaks of the influence the saved spouse can have on the unsaved spouse. To put it simply, Paul is saying that the saved spouse is a godly source in the marriage to reaching the unsaved spouse. A saved spouse can be a valuable tool in the hands of God to reach the unsaved spouse. The testimony of the saved spouse can have a "sanctifying" influence over both the unsaved spouse and the children.

#### **VERSE 15:**

Sometimes a Christian living faithfully for God is offensive to his mate. Not because the Christian is cantankerous, unkind or rebellious, but because the unsaved person hates Christ and Christianity. I think that is rare. If the unbelieving husband departs, let him depart.

Some commentaries seem to think this means that if the unconverted mate will not go on with the marriage, then the Christian has a right to divorce. We must again take note of - **Matthew 5:31-32** for this answer. Still, a Christian is not bound to live with an unsaved mate who will not have him or her.

#### **VERSE 16:**

According to - **I Peter 3:1-2**, it is far better for the Christian wife to win her unsaved husband than to walk away from the marriage. The godly wife, who loves her husband and obeys him as the Scripture commands, would surely be a tremendous influence on an ungodly husband. Therefore, the Christian mate ought to be able to win the unsaved mate. Because one is now saved and the other unsaved is no real, nor scriptural reason for divorce.

Whereas, it is true that a saved spouse can have a positive influence over the unsaved spouse, it is also true that the saved spouse can have a negative influence.

A saved spouse can at times be more of a hindrance than a help in getting a spouse saved or in church. When one lives before an unsaved spouse a compassionate, concerned, and committed Christian life, it can have a positive impact.

### **VERSES 17 -20:**

When you read - **verses 17-24**, it is almost like he changes subjects and suddenly begins to talk about something that has nothing to do with marriage. The passage primarily deals with learning to be content with one's position in life. Its relation to marriage is that Paul was emphasizing the permanence of the marriage relationship.

He immediately picks up with the marriage theme in - **verse 25**, but between **verse 16** and **verse 25**, he inserts a truth that has the aim of dealing with the discontentment among Corinthian believers. There were several areas the church at Corinth was expressing discontentment. Marital status was just one of the areas. There were those that wanted to change their marital status from single to married, from married to single, or from being married to an unsaved spouse to a saved spouse.

It is a part of this old carnal nature of ours to be dissatisfied, to murmur with our circumstances, and to wish a change. So the Christian may even argue to himself that he can be a better Christian if he were somewhere else, if he were a member of a different church or if he had a different wife and the list could go on and on.

But this discontentment is generally wrong. **II Timothy 1:7 - For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound, (settled) mind**". And the psalmist David was inspired to say in **Psalm 108:1 - "O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory"**, In **Psalm 112:7-8 - "Of a good man" it is said, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid."** So here, the divine command is that one is to be content where God has put him.

Is one man - **"circumcised"**, a Jew? Then let him be a Christian Jew, but not conceal the fact that he is a Jew and not throw away his contact with loved ones and friends and the blessing God gave to Jews.

Is one a Gentile - **"uncircumcised"**? Then, of course, do not try to be a Jew, do not undertake to follow the ceremonial law.

Take note of the seriousness of this word - **"distributed"** which Paul uses in this verse. It speaks of that which has been allotted or assigned. Paul states that God has "assigned" certain things as they pertain to our life. Paul speaks of God's assignment in life as a "call."

In fact, 7 times in our text Paul speaks of God's assignment as a call or calling:

**V:17 - "as the Lord hath called everyone."**

**V:18 - "Is any man called."**

**V:20 - "Let every man abide in the same calling."**

**V:21 - "Art thou called."**

**V:22 - "For he that is called."**

**V:22 - "Likewise also he that is called."**

**V:24 - "Brethren, let every man wherein he is called."**

Notice carefully that Paul places great emphases on God's assignment and call as involving every believer:

**V:17 - "every man"**

**V:17- "every one"**

**V:20 - "every man"**

**V:24 - "every man"**

God has a plan for every believer's life – **Ephesians 2:10**. Every believer is included and none are excluded. Therefore, it is important that each believer understand God's will - **Ephesians 5:17**.

We not only need to understand God's will, but we also need to be doers of God's will. Look at the phrase - **"so let him walk."** We are not only to understand God's will but undertake that will. We are to walk in the will of God. Paul is simply saying that we are to do God's will - **Romans 12:2**.

I read the following and think it fits perfectly with this verse:

I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,  
 Real service is what I desire.  
 I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord,  
 But please don't ask me to sing in the choir.  
 I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord,  
 I like to see things come to pass.  
 But don't ask me to teach boys or girls, dear Lord,  
 I'd rather just stay in my class.  
 I'll do what you want me to do, dear Lord,  
 I long for the Kingdom thrive.  
 I'll give you my nickels and dimes, dear Lord,  
 But please, don't ask me to tithe.  
 I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,  
 I'll say what you want me to say.  
 I'm busy just now with myself, dear Lord,  
 I'll help you some other day.

Sadly, that is often the attitude of many. Instead, we ought to pray as our Lord did – **Matthew 26:39 - "nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."** We should both understand and undertake God's assignment and call.

### **VERSE 21 – 24:**

From race, Paul moved to the social status of slaves and free men. Since more than half of the Roman Empire was composed of slaves, many of the early Christians came from slavery. In the secular world, slavery was viewed as a mark of personal inferiority. To some converted slaves, this fact caused serious concern. Paul commanded them not to let their slave status be a cause of anxiety, **Philippians 4:6**, lest they become spiritually ineffective. Rather, they should use their slavery as a means to glorify God - **Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-25; I Peter 2:18-25**. If they were able to become free, through the desire of the master or the payment of a ransom, they were also to use their social liberty as a means to honoring God.

Contrary to common belief, in Christ men are spiritually the opposite of what they are in the world - **7:22**. A natural slave in the world has been set free from the bondage of sin and is now a free man in Christ. He should not let his temporal, human bondage rob him of the joy of his eternal, spiritual freedom - **John 8:36**.

Note: the free man in the world, at conversion, becomes a spiritual slave. He must learn the principles of total submission to the will of his Heavenly master - **Ephesians 6:9**; **Colossians 4:1**.

Both the natural slave and the free man were slaves to sin and both were redeemed from their spiritual plight by the precious price of Christ's shed blood - **7:23**; **I Peter 1:18-19**. Since they were both bought, they both belong to Christ and owe their total allegiance to Him - **6:19-20**. A free man voluntarily should not sell himself into human slavery, and the natural slave should see himself first as the possession of God. Divine obligation supersedes human demands.

Paul then concluded by reiterating his main subject. Men should **"abide"** or remain content in that place in life in which God saved them. They should do so with full assurance that God is with them in their circumstances and that they should live near God no matter what problems confront them. (Note the addition of the words **"with God"** - **7:24**.)

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**Study Guide**

1. In - **verses 6-9** Paul answers the question, "Should a person get \_\_\_\_\_ or not?"  
In - **verses 10-15** Paul answers the questions, "Should I \_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_?"
2. Getting a divorce just because one is unhappy is not \_\_\_\_\_ nor \_\_\_\_\_ by God - **Matthew 5:32; Matthew 19:9.**
3. But, if she ignores the commands of God and leaves anyway because there is such disagreement - "**let her remain \_\_\_\_\_, or be \_\_\_\_\_ to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife**".
4. Just because judges, legislators and the Supreme Court gives approval of divorce does that change the laws and commands of God? \_\_\_\_\_.
5. What does the Bible say about a saved person marrying a lost person?  
**I Corinthians 7:39; II Corinthians 6:14.**
6. In **verse 14** Paul is saying that a wife who lives a \_\_\_\_\_ can win her lost husband by her \_\_\_\_\_.
7. According to **verse 16** and **I Peter 3:1-2**, it is far better for the Christian wife to \_\_\_\_\_ her unsaved husband than to walk away from the marriage.
8. Explain how a saved spouse can be more of a hindrance than a help in getting a spouse saved or in church.
9. This lesson primarily deals with learning to be \_\_\_\_\_ with one's position in life.
10. Between **verse 16** and **verse 25**, he inserts a truth that has the aim of dealing with the \_\_\_\_\_ among church members.
11. It is a part of this old \_\_\_\_\_ of ours to be \_\_\_\_\_, to murmur with our \_\_\_\_\_ and to wish a \_\_\_\_\_.
12. Paul states that God has "\_\_\_\_\_" certain things as they pertain to our life.
13. God has a \_\_\_\_\_ for every believer's life.
14. We not only need to \_\_\_\_\_ God's will, but we also need to be \_\_\_\_\_ of God's will.
15. Men should "\_\_\_\_\_" in the place in life God saved them.